

SIGNS OF *WAQF* (PAUSES) IN THE QUR'AAN

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When the people of any language speak, there are some places where they pause and some places where they do not break their words, depending on the meaning they wish to convey. The style of the Qur'aan is such that there are also places where one should either pause or continue reading.

The Arabic word وقف (*waqf*) literally means “stop.” In terms of recitation of the Qur'aan it refers to the breaking of the voice for a period while the reciter stops to take a breath with the intention of continuing the recitation. In order to prevent mistakes in recitation, various abbreviated signs are provided in the Qur'aan for those who are not familiar with the Qur'aanic sciences and the Arabic language. It is necessary to follow all these signs as strictly as possible in order to prevent mistakes in recitation. The signs, listed and explained below, appear in the Qur'aan slightly smaller and higher than the rest of the text. See the reverse side for a sample page from the Qur'aan.

○ وقف تام - *waqf taam* or “perfect stop”: This sign indicates the end of a verse. At this point, the meaning is complete and one should stop reading and take a breath before continuing. Originally, this sign was written as ؕ, but is now simply indicated by a circle.

م وقف لازم - *waqf laazim* or “required stop”: It is absolutely necessary to stop here. If one does not do so, the meaning will be changed drastically. A rough example in English would be to say: “Stand not! Sit!” as opposed to “Stand! Not sit!” In such a case the meaning has been changed to the opposite of what was intended.

ط وقف مطلق - *waqf mutlaq* or “absolute stop”: One should break the breath and voice before continuing. This differs from the *ayah* in that the full sentence has not been completed yet and there is something more to follow before the meaning is complete.

ج وقف جائز - *waqf jaa'iz* or “permissible stop”: It is better to stop here but if one does not, that is fine.

ز وقف مجوز - *waqf mujawwaz*: It is better not to stop here.

ص وقف مرنحس - *waqf murakh-khas* or “licensed pause”: One should continue reading at this sign but if one is tired and pauses to take a breath, it is also permissible. It is more desirable to continue at this sign than at ز.

صل الوصل الأولى - *al-wasl awlaa* or “continuing is preferable”: It is better to continue reciting here.


قِيلَ عَلَيْهِ الْوَقْفُ - *qeela 'alayhil-waqf*. It has been said that it is better not to stop here. This sign indicates differing opinions on whether to stop or not.

قَدْ يَوْسَلْ - *qad yusal*: It is better to stop here but to continue is permissible.

قِفْ - *qif* or “stop!”: This sign is used where it is anticipated that the reciter might otherwise continue reading instead of stopping.

سَكَتْ - *saktah* or “silence”: At this sign one should stop reading but not break the breath before continuing. There are four places in the Qur’aan where it is obligatory: in verses occurring in *Surah Kahf, Yaaseen, Qiyaamah* and *Mutaf-fifeen*.

وَقَفَّ - *waqfah*: One should pause here longer than at a سَكَتْ, again without breaking the breath.

لَا - *laa* or “no!”: One should absolutely not stop here because to do so would affect the meaning. If this sign occurs on top of an , it is still better not to stop but if one does so, the meaning will be all right.

كَذَلِكَ - *kadhaalik* or “like that”: One should apply the previous sign of *waqf* at this position as well.

مُعَانَقَتَا - *mu'aanaqah* or “embracing stop”: These dot triples appear in pairs close to each other and indicate that a stop at the first makes a stop at the second prohibited because the meaning would become incomplete. Thus, one can stop at one or the other of these marks but not both.

ه - Indicates a point where there are differing opinions as to whether it is the end of an *ayah* or not.

وَقَفَّ النَّبِيُّ - *waqf-un-nabi*: Indicates places where the Prophet (ﷺ) paused.

وَقَفَّ غُفْرَانٌ - *waqf ghufraan*: It is said that if the reciter and listener make *du'a* when pausing at these places, it will be accepted.

وَقَفَّ مَنْزِلٌ - *waqf manzil*: also known as *waqf jibra'il* is where Jibreel (peace be upon him) paused at the time of revelation.